

/90 cont. /

583 196. To constitute a family, in general, no other thing
584 is influential except the mutual inclination of the parties and
593 their complete freedom; in such a way that marriages are frequently made against the will of the parents, sometimes on trips or in distant rancherías and even with individuals of a different tribe; and that the return of a son or a daughter, after a long absence, to his or her parents, introducing to them the new daughter-in-law or new son-in-law, which so often appears in stories, is a faithful transcription of real life.

583 Material interest then customarily flourishes on the lips of
606 the woman's progenitors with respect to their son-in-law, since they consider him to have benefitted (as in fact he has) through the acquisition of the daughter raised by them with so much work, and as a consequence they usually ask him to help them in their chores or in the building of houses; but from this it should not be inferred that this is a matter of purchase-sale nor of inferiority of the woman.

621 197. Concerning the lack of ultra-family organization,
622 the so-often cited Juan Pimentel says in his geographic report
643 of Caracas Province the following: "There are not nor has it
651 been possible to confirm that in all this province of Caracas there have been any caciques or lords of estate or seignior, nor do they pay tribute to anyone."

105 And more extensively he says in Chapter 15: "The natives
622 of this province did not have nor do they have any government or police in matters of justice nor in anything which resembles this; it is all personal independence, for as there are not, nor have there been, caciques or lords, they have not had anyone to obey, and thus Peter is as good as his master; because when they eat they get together by house or barrios, and the first to stick in his hand might be the lowest rather than his better,
264 and the boy rather than the old man; for among them there is neither superiority nor betterness by way of lineage nor in any
554 other respect; except that, if in some way there is some respected Indian, it is by way of being a piache, as has been said,

105 /90 cont. /

• [575] or that some Indian, be he a good worker and that he gets drunk
[554] often or has many women, daughters /sic/ and sons-in-law and
[593] daughters-in-law, whence proceeds some good kinsmen and
these obey him as an elder relative; or by dint of valor they
respect one who is so and in war has killed some Indian or more;
and in conformity with those whom he has killed they make
him that many crowns and give him that many names."

114 This and other simple reports, made without affectation
and straightforwardly, show very clearly the exaggeration of
some old chroniclers and some modern /91/ fiction writers
when they describe various caciques in the style of classic
histories, but very far from the plain truth and the unvarnished
truth of ethnography.

Chapter XXIV

Do the Indians Have a Religion?

000 198. Religiousness, a human characteristic? 199. The
difficulty in studying noncodified religions. 200. Comparison
with the study of language. 201. Preconceptions of the
missionaries?

198. Another of the characteristics generally attributed to
mankind is religiousness. "The former Mission companion,"
from the way in which he asks me the question, is also among
those who believe that there cannot be a race or tribe, a horde
or whatever, without religion.

This is what Cicero was thinking when he said: "There is
no nation either so savage or so fierce that, even when it be
ignorant of which God it ought to have, does not know that it
ought to have one." And thus thought and still think, doubtless,
the majority of men. But in this, as in everything, there is no